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DISCUSS IMPROVEMENT OF NAVIGATION AIDS
ON SIBERIAN RIVERS

There are about 35,000 kilometers of waterways in Siberia and in the East. On these waterways there are about 50,000 navigation aids, of which nearly 20,000 are provided with night illumination. Thousands of buoy keepers, and dozens of steam- and gas-propelled boats and motor launches service these facilities. Over 40 percent of the total allotments for all route maintenance work is spent on them.

The importance of these navigation aids on the Siberian and Far Eastern rivers is increased by the absence of a maintenance fleet in those regions. Channel markers are moved about to indicate the river depth for the transport fleet. Much work has been done recently to develop and improve navigation conditions on the eastern rivers. Since 1947, nearly all old beacons have been replaced (except for some in the Irtysh and Lena basins) by new standard ones. Shore, navigational, and obstacle beacons with inclined shields of a trapezoidal form have been accepted as All-Union Standards for the Yenisey, Angara, Lena, and Amur rivers. At present, over 3,000 of these perfected shore markers are in use in the middle and lower stretches of the eastern rivers, and about 700 more will be installed during this navigation season. The total number of markers used on these rivers has increased 15 percent in the last 4 years, the number of shore installations 17 percent.

In spite of these improvement, navigation conditions on the eastern rivers are inadequate. In many sections, shallow river depths seriously hamper ship traffic and cause accidents. Also, nearly every river has sections, especially in its lower reaches, where there are no beacon facilities or the beacons are spaced too far apart. Some of them are unlighted, making night navigation difficult.

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The average density of beacon facilities on the eastern rivers is only half as great as on the rivers of the central basins of the country. Formerly, when each ship carried a pilot, this difficulty was not so evident, but with the fleet increasing in size and the change-over to the navigator's system of ship traffic, such a situation can no longer be allowed.

In the next 4-5 years, it is planned to provide the waterways with a great many beacon facilities, bringing them up to definite technical standards. Particular attention is paid to the reconstruction of shore installations in the lower reaches of the Ob and Yenisey.

At present most of the beacons are lighted by kerosene lamps. Such illumination is inadequate on broad and long river stretches and, in rainy and windy weather, lights are often extinguished. Many workers are needed to service such facilities. Following the example of the system of navigation aids on the Volga River, electrically illuminated beacons were introduced on the Irtysh, Angara, and Amur rivers in 1950 and electricity is being introduced in all basins during 1951.

The electrical facilities will be serviced by a motorized fleet which will permit the release of several thousand station workers. The development of sources of electric power supply being undertaken at present by electrotechnicians and route maintenance workers will permit a considerable reduction in the maintenance cost of electrified beacons. Those sections with the densest river traffic and the smallest population will be electrified first. Beacons will be illuminated by acetylene lanterns in the lower reaches of the Ob, Yenisey, Lena, and Amur rivers, where navigation conditions are similar to those of lakes and seas. During the next 5 years, it is planned to electrify and motorize the beacon installations in half of all the operating waterways of the basins. To carry out this program successfully, basin route administrations and maintenance sections must now start training mechanics and electricians and must begin organizing workshops for the production and repair of electrical equipment. Courses in applied electrotechnics must be conducted in tekhnikums and in maintenance departments of river schools.

Several hundred motorboats will be required to service these facilities. At present, such boats are produced by the Plant imeni Stalin in Astrakhan' and are brought in by rail. In the future, Glavvostok (Main Administration of River Fleet of Eastern Basins) must organize the construction of motorboats in the East at one of its own industrial enterprises.

In the present administrative structure, the basic productional unit is the region, which is divided into sections and beacon stations. The normal length of a region is 300-400 kilometers, while sections are from 40 to 60 kilometers long. For the maintenance and control of beacon stations, the region is usually allotted a self-propelled ship of 150 to 200 horsepower, while a section is given a motor launch of 30 to 100 horsepower. This equipment is not adequate. Half the regions are $2\frac{1}{2}$ times longer than normal. Some of the regions of the Irtysh, Yenisey, and Lena rivers are 800 kilometers long, and some sections even cover 200-300 kilometers, the length of an entire region. Even under these conditions, four maintenance regions and a majority of sections have no self-propelled ships at all at their disposal.

Maintenance regions and sections must be subdivided, but it is impossible to do so while there is a shortage of self-propelled ships. The ship lines, which received many additional ships during the past few years, could help the maintenance sections, but the ship line heads are very reluctant to share their vessels with maintenance organizations.

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In sailing upstream, a ship's efficiency is increased when routes are marked outside the main channel where the current is not as strong and if corners are cut where the river meanders most. Therefore, two separate routes should be marked, one for upstream traffic, the other for downstream traffic. Until now, secondary routes have been marked only in the most important river sections.

Current information on the condition of river routes is most important in guaranteeing safe navigation conditions and efficient hauling by river vessels. However, there is no dial telephone system along the eastern rivers, and many large shoals are located far from telegraph connections. It is not always possible for passing ships to send regular reports of soundings through radio stations.

The beacon facilities are not supplied with material and technical supplies as required. As a result, electrification of the navigation aids must be curtailed. Other materials have also been short. For example, too little calcium carbide which is required for the production of acetylene gas, has been allotted. The basin route administrations have received only half of the gas required for their navigation requirements. If calcium carbide is not received in the future, production of acetylene gas will lag, and some of the important beacons will be without illumination.

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